



Town of Wenham

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Selectmen / Town Administrator
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectmen
FROM: Peter Lombardi, Town Administrator
RE: Town Administrator's Report
DATE: November 17, 2015

Personnel

The full-time Finance Assistant and Payroll Clerk position has been posted, and we are conducting active outreach to the local colleges and universities to try to further cultivate interest. Submissions are due by Monday November 30, with interviews to follow. We hope to have this position filled by early January.

With Steve Gasperoni set to retire in February 2016, we are planning to post the Assessor position within the next week or two now that we have finalized that job description with input from the Board of Assessors. Our goal is to have a transition plan that includes bringing in the new hire for some training before Steve's departure.

FY17 Budget

The Finance Director, Angel Wills, and I met with Department Heads on October 15 and reviewed a synopsis of the Financial Forecast presentation that was given to the Board of Selectmen in mid-September of this year. In short, our message was consistent with the guidelines that the Board outlined on October 13 – a level services budget, with a goal to keep total Town expense increases below 3%. Budget submissions were due yesterday, and Angel and I are meeting with Departments Heads all week to review their initial requests. Over the next few weeks, we will continue to hone these submissions in preparation for department presentations to the Board on Saturday December 5th.

Contract Negotiations

I have met with each of the three bargaining units (Police, Fire, and AFSCME) over the past few weeks and have begun contract negotiations on their employment agreements, which are all set to expire next June. We have held several meetings to date and have more scheduled over the coming weeks, with an eye toward trying to come to agreement in time to include any financial considerations for FY17 in this year's budget building process.

Town Counsel Services

Requests for Information have been distributed to several municipal law firms for Town Counsel services. Long-time Town Counsel Paul Weaver is retiring from his position in the near future and has been instrumental in crafting a transition plan that will leave the Town in good legal standing. Written submissions from interested firms are due back on

December 1. Paul and I will interview the firms during the week of December 7, and hope to have a recommendation for the Board at their last meeting in December.

Annual Town Meeting Date

At the Board's October 13 meeting, there was some discussion about the possibility of moving back to a May Annual Town Meeting date. I was tasked with evaluating some of the logistical considerations. My findings are as follows: After speaking with Hamilton officials, it is clear that they plan to maintain their April meeting date in 2016. Several key Wenham officials have also already made travel plans that would preclude them from participating in the meeting if it was held in May. In addition, the possibility that the Town will have to respond to its first right of refusal on the Lakeview property sometime during the spring months has created its own potential challenges in terms of scheduling.

Community Compact Signing Event

Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito will be visiting Wenham on Tuesday December 15 at 2:15PM to formally sign our Community Compact with the Commonwealth. As a reminder, as part of this program, the Town committed to implement best practices in Financial Management (Capital Improvement Plan - CIP) and Information Technology (Resident Engagement Strategy). We have already defined a scope of work for the CIP and have reached out to a number of prospective consultants who could lend their expertise to this project using grant funds made available through the Compact program.

Boulder Lane

We have reached out to a number of area appraisers to gauge their interest in helping the Town to take the next step forward on this project. While various development scenarios have been considered over the years, the Town is currently inclined to move forward with one property owner in particular, leaving the remaining adjacent parcels out of the equation for now. Using the findings from the feasibility study that was conducted by BSC Group through MassDevelopment, we have asked for an appraisal that details the proportional value of the Town's land and of the property owner's parcels.

As has been discussed, the goal is to come to consensus on the value of each party's parcels relative to the development potential for the property in its entirety such that a joint development agreement can be drafted and the property can then be marketed and hopefully developed pending the approval of Town Meeting. Several appraisers have expressed strong interest in the project but need clarification in terms of the intended or proposed uses of these properties in order to develop an appraisal that accurately reflects market costs.

Municipal Phone Lines

Having achieved no progress working through Verizon's traditional customer service channels, I have now made some headway on our phone infrastructure issues by reaching out directly to Stan Usovich, their regional Government Affairs liaison. He recognizes that our long-standing issues remain unaddressed, and is working with his engineering team to ascertain the feasibility of converting our lines to fiber since that technology already exists in the Town.